

The Royal Reaper

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Author: ThatPersonYouMightKnow

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Summary: Still recovering from his life-threatening illness, Simba has to save Nala from a psycho he thought he made up, known as the 'Royal Reaper'...

Chapter 1: Chapter 1: Recovering Slowly

AN: I'm back! I'm sure you've been eagerly awaiting this story, especially after what happened to poor little Simba in the *last* one. I promise this one won't be depressing, though. I *really* do!

The Royal Reaper

Chapter One: Recovering Slowly

"Oh..." Simba groaned in annoyance, his body aching all over. He tossed and turned this way and that, but nothing seemed to work. It just kept on aching, and aching, and *aching*...

Was there no way to stop this? Granted, he was mysteriously recovering from a life-threatening illness which by all rights he should have died from, but that wasn't the point right now! What was the point was that his body wouldn't stop aching! It wasn't really painful, but it was... irritating. Yes, that was the right word. Annoying. Irritating. Irking.

"I'm ready to snap," Simba said aloud, annoyance evident in his voice. "I mean it! All my bones are ready to snap!"

"Simba, stop complaining," said Nala, who was lying on her stomach in front of him, resting her head on her paws. "Last time I checked, it's the *wife* who is supposed to complain, not the husband."

"Nala, we're not married!" Simba exclaimed, nibbling on his claws to try and ignore his aching body – but even his *claws* were aching, too.

"You said 'I do', Simba," Nala reminded him. "Looks like you'll have to face facts that you're the first cub in the Pride Lands to get married."

"I was crazy then," Simba explained. "I thought I was gonna die. *Of course* I would have married you! It's just that... now that I'm *not* dying... we don't need to get married yet."

"What's so wrong with getting married to your one true love, Simba?" Nala asked, rolling onto her back and looking up at the den ceiling. "Unless you're secretly in love with someone else in the pride. I just hope it's not Zazu."

Simba chuckled, and forgot about the aching for a moment... until he realised his mouth was aching. "I'm *not* in love with someone else, Nala. But this marriage – combined with this aching – is just making me feel... *old*."

Nala giggled. "You feel old? Come on, Simba – you've looked the same ever since I first met you. You're *far* from being old. You've got, like, nine thousand years before that happens."

"Still doesn't stop me *feeling* old," Simba remarked, groaning again. "Everything keeps aching. Right from the top of my tuft to the tips of my toes!"

"Oh, never mind your toes!" Nala exclaimed, hopping to her paws and walking over to Simba's side. "Why don't you try moving a little bit? You know, to try and *stop* the aching?"

"What if it makes it worse?" Simba cried, suddenly looking worried. "My legs could fall off if I try to get up!"

Nala rolled her eyes. "Simba, you've been lying there for two weeks. Every time you want to go somewhere I've had to carry you. Soon I won't have the strength to even *drag* you. Now come on – I'll help you up and you can try to walk."

Simba sighed, and contemplated it for a few seconds, before nodding. "Okay. Let's try and do this. Maybe then I can start doing things for myself again. Stupid Kulaani illness... I don't know who makes this stuff up!"

Nala smiled in response. "Great! Just use all your strength to get up, and then walking will be easy! You'll be back to your old self in no time!"

Simba nodded. "Right." Groaning, Simba rolled onto his stomach, and slowly pushed himself up. He could feel his muscles straining as he did so. This illness had made his whole body feel all rigid and brittle. He'd barely walked, due to his body feeling so weak. He wasn't his usual energetic self – but he *wanted* to be. He eagerly awaited the day when he would wake up to find that all his strength had returned, and he could run all around the Pride Lands having adventures with Nala once more. Just like the good old days...

The past few days certainly hadn't been good to the Prince of the Pride Lands. The trouble just hadn't ended for him.

It all started with the vampires. Ever since Tama bit him in the neck, all he'd received was pain and misery. Thanks to Tama, she had given Simba a severe blood infection known as the Kulaani illness, which meant 'curse'. It slowly killed someone over the course of just a few days, before they fell asleep... and never woke up again. It was horrifying, it was painful, and it made your life – at least, what was left of it – *hell*.

"Here I go..." Simba grunted, as he pushed himself to his paws, standing upright, his head held high. All that could be heard for a few moments was the sound of him breathing heavily.

"Any change?" Nala asked, gritting her teeth, hopeful that Simba had regained at least a *little* bit of strength. *After two weeks he should be walking!* Nala told herself. *He will be walking! I'll make sure of it!*

Simba grinned, feeling like his whole body was flowing with strength. "I feel... I feel... I feel..." Simba collapsed, his body splayed out on the ground. "Pathetic," he finished miserably.

Nala sighed sadly. "We're not getting anywhere, are we? You still feeling weak?" she asked, resulting in a little nod from Simba, who was looking up at her with a big frown on his face.

"I hate this!" Simba exclaimed. "I'm supposed to have a strong body! Not one that feels like it's going to fall apart any second! What am I gonna do, Nala?"

"You just need to keep trying," Nala explained. "Otherwise you're never gonna get moving again." Nala sighed sadly, turning away from Simba, a sneaky look on her face. "If you don't, then I guess we won't be able to go on crazy adventures any more. I'll just have to go all by myself. Poor Simba... you'll just have to stay here for the rest of your life."

"What? No way!" Simba shouted, hopping to his paws, suddenly feeling like the strongest cub in the world. "We're going on an adventure right now!" Simba started storming out of the den. He only made it a few steps before he collapsed onto his stomach again, groaning in pain. "Ow..."

Nala rushed over to Simba's side. "Simba, are you okay?" she asked, putting a paw on his shoulder.

"No... I feel more miserable than I ever have been," he replied, pushing his face into the ground. "Even more miserable than when you fell in love with Moto."

"Simba, I wasn't *really* in love with Moto," Nala told him. "He just had me under his spell."

"That wasn't the only thing you were under," Simba remarked flatly. "His mouth, if I remember correctly."

Nala laughed, and collapsed onto her stomach right next to him. "Look on the bright side, Simba – at least you made it a few steps," she said, looking back at Simba's original spot, which wasn't exactly all that far away.

Simba groaned as he pushed himself up again, spreading out his legs so he would stay upright. "I need to get my legs moving again," he explained, looking out of the den opening. "I bet if I run, then all the energy will rush back to me, and I'll be out exploring the Outlands before you can say 'Simba, you're the best cub who's ever lived!'"

"If you say so," Nala said, looking up as she watched Simba getting ready to run. He hopped from left to right, ignoring his aching bones and focusing on getting out of here. He was determined. Determined to fight this illness and recover from it like he'd never been ill in the first place. That's how determined he looked!

Simba continued hopping. "Three... two... one... *go!*" With that final cry, Simba raced towards the den opening, determined to escape from the den and embrace the outside world.

Nala's eyes widened. *He's gonna do it*, she realised happily. *He's really gonna do it!*

Simba continued to race forwards, knowing that nothing could stop him now! He was invincible!

Unfortunately, he didn't notice the rock on the ground, and tripped right over it, sending him skidding across the den and smacking right into the wall with a *thump!* "Okay... I'm hurt now."

"This is gonna take some time," Nala said to herself.

***Chapter 2*: Chapter 2: A New Feeling**

Chapter Two: A New Feeling

"You know, Tojo, I always thought you were kind of cute. But then the innocent ones always are, aren't they? You just make me tingle all over with excitement. I want you so badly. Now kiss me, you fool!"

"Tojo!" Tama shouted, snapping Tojo out of his daydream.

"Where's the trouble?" Tojo exclaimed, jumping to his paws. "Who do we have to kill?"

"No one, silly," Tama replied. "You were daydreaming again. I don't like it when you go where I can't follow."

"Touching," Tojo remarked flatly, a frown on his face. "Feeling in a controlling mood today, are we?"

"Not at all," Tama replied, rolling onto her back so she was looking up at the bright blue sky. "I've never felt better. After all, we have just moved into a lovely new home."

Tojo narrowed his eyes. "I beg to differ..."

For the past two weeks, Tama and Tojo had been leaving in fear. Tama knew that it wouldn't be long before Simba discovered that it was *she* who had bitten him, infecting him with the Kulaani illness. She figured that it was only a matter of time before she and Tojo were captured and put on trial for their crimes. She had a sickening feeling that the punishment was death. Tojo had even heard of a rumour that the punishment involved being *tickled* to death... and she certainly didn't want that.

So, as a precaution, Tama and Tojo had fled to the Outlands, which was now to become their new home – and it was certainly one that she loved. So what if there was no food or water? It was the quietest place she'd ever been to, and no one could tell her what to do here! She was a free person! She had her own little kingdom! She was the new Queen of the Outlands!

"Oh, Tojo, do you have to complain about everything?" Tama said, glaring at him. "We've got a lovely new home, with plenty of space to do whatever we want! It's our little piece of paradise!"

"But it's so unclean!" Tojo complained. "You can't go anywhere without stepping on a sharp stick! Every den we sleep in is filled with sharp rocks! My back feels like it's going to split open!"

Tama rolled her eyes. "Well, if you think it's so bad, then clean it up yourself! I've got sun to soak up."

"Can it get any worse?" Tojo moaned, looking up at the sky.

"It could be raining," Tama replied. "It could be raining really badly. But just *look* at the weather! Not a cloud in the sky! And you say this isn't paradise? I just *love* it!"

Tojo gave her an angry glare. "There's only one thing I love in this place, and it isn't the surroundings!" he said, before turning around and leaving.

"Don't stray too far," Tama warned him. "You never know when the King is around, ready to capture us for our horrible crime." Tama closed her eyes, and shuffled herself into a comfortable position. A few seconds passed, and then her eyes snapped open. "What did he mean by that?" she exclaimed, wondering about what Tojo had said before he left.

"There's only one thing I love in this place, and it isn't the surroundings!"

Tojo kept on walking until he reached the border between the Pride Lands and the Outlands. He could tell where he was because of the significant difference between the two locations: one side was covered with plants and grass; the other was covered with dirt and rocks. Two completely different locations had been fused together, like some kind of sick mutation.

"I can't believe I have to live there!" Tojo exclaimed, collapsing onto the grass, lying on his back. "How can she expect me to live there? How can she expect me to *like* living there? How can she... she... make me feel so happy?" he finished, a confused look on his face.

Tojo couldn't explain it, but these days, whenever he saw Tama he couldn't help but feel... happy. She insulted him all the time and treated him like dirt – but aside from that, she made him feel happier than he'd ever felt before.

Ever since they first met, Tojo knew that there was some kind of... connection between the two of them. His pride had burned to the ground, and everyone he knew with it, but Tama had rescued him. He could recall the incident quite vividly...

Burning. Everything was burning. Everything and everyone. Fires blazed and roared across the land, reducing everything to ash. The trees, the plants, the people... Everything was decaying right in front of Tojo. Everything he had known, his whole life, was being torn apart in a matter of seconds.

Tojo didn't know how the fire had started. All he knew was that he had to get away. Escape. Get away from this pride, and run as far away as he could. Find somewhere different to live. He couldn't stay here. Not now.

Tojo wanted to move, but he just couldn't. His whole body felt paralysed. His legs were numb, and he felt totally frozen, fixed to the spot while everything around him burned fiercely.

Tojo didn't know how long he stood there, staring at the horrific destruction of his pride. Time seemed to go by so slowly for him, watching each and every thing he knew die. People were screaming and dying, but there was nothing he could do about it. Nothing...

Slowly, Tojo turned around, not wanting to witness this any more. He felt like crying, but knew that it would be pointless. He just needed to run. Run far away and never return ever again. There was nothing left for him here now.

When he turned around, Tojo found himself staring at a cloud of thick, black, acrid smoke that was right in front of him. It looked like some ugly monster that wanted to envelop and kill him. His whole surroundings had taken on such a vivid appearance. How had all this started?

From out of the black smoke, Tojo could make out a figure emerging from it. It was a small person, he realised, as the figure got closer and closer. It certainly wasn't an adult, that was for sure. It looked like a cub...

And then he saw her. The cub with the tanned cream-coloured fur that had an orange tint to it. The cub with the orange eyes and a messy tuft of fur on her head and tail. The cub who Tojo didn't know was going to completely alter his whole life.

"Need some help?" the cub offered, holding out a paw to Tojo.

Tojo nodded, his eyes wide as he stared at her. "Who are you?" he croaked, finding it rather hard to speak. This smoke was choking his throat...

"My name's Tama," she introduced herself. "Don't ever forget it. I don't take very kindly to people who forget who I am. I have a very sinister reputation."

"Can you get us out of here?" he asked, hopeful that this new cub – Tama – knew some way they could escape.

Tama nodded in response. "Yes, I can. But before we get into all that, what's your name?"

"Tojo," he introduced himself.

A little smile formed on Tama's face. "Tojo, eh? For a guy called that you're not very light on your paws. You've hardly moved since I've been here! You do know your whole pride's burning to the ground, right?"

"How do we escape?" Tojo asked.

A cruel smile formed on Tama's face. "Well, Tojo... there's a very simple answer to that question..." Tama grabbed Tojo by the throat violently, pulling his face up to hers. "You're going to become my slave, and you'll do everything I say. Carry me everywhere, massage my paws, eat who I eat! Everything! Have I made myself clear, you miserable piece of filth?"

Tojo stared into her orange eyes, and then nodded. "Yes," he agreed. "I just want to get out of here."

Tama grabbed hold of his paw and shook it. "Then it looks like we have a deal, Tojo. Welcome to my world."

AN: Cool revelation, huh? I've always wanted to write about how Tama and Tojo first met. So, what did you think? Pleased? Shocked? Appalled? You might as well use that little blue button at the bottom of the screen, which allows you to write random words that tell me how good – or bad – my story is. Farewell until tomorrow, fellow readers!

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: Who Tojo Is

AN: This chapter is quite interesting, because a secret is revealed. A *big* secret. Quite a surprising one, actually. Want to know what it is? Read on...

Chapter Three: Who Tojo Is

"Okay... so the running thing isn't working too good," said Simba, as he lay on his back, still in pain from smacking head-first into the den wall. "Maybe we should try something else – like making you carry me everywhere." He nodded, smiling. "Yeah. That sounds good."

"Simba!" Nala exclaimed. She was standing over him, a smile on her face. "You can't just expect me to carry you all over the place. How are you ever going to walk again if you don't even try?" Nala lifted up one of his paws, waving it in front of his face. "These things have gotta move if you want to take me on your crazy adventures. Do you see what I'm getting at, Simba?"

"Believe me, Nala, I'd love to walk, but this stupid illness is making it too hard for me. It's been two weeks – *two weeks* – since I first had it. Don't you think it would have gone away by now?" he asked, annoyed that everything he loved to do had been taken away from him. This illness just seemed to want to steal your whole life. It truly was a curse.

Nala thought for a moment. "Well... you did almost die. Maybe we just need to wait a few more days?" she suggested with a shrug. If the illness was still in Simba's body, then maybe he really *did* need to rest up some more. She decided that it was no good trying to make him walk today. After all, it could make it *worse*...

"But I want to walk *now*!" Simba complained, rolling onto his stomach, a miserable frown on his face. "Why is life so unfair sometimes? All I want to do is have a little bit of fun. Is that really too much to ask for?"

Nala put a paw under Simba's chin, pushing his head up so he was looking at her. "Hey... cheer up, Simba. It'll get better. I promise," she assured him, giving him her warmest smile, which always managed to cheer him up whenever he was feeling down.

Seeing that smile made Simba's heart warm a little bit. "Do... do you really think so?" he asked, cocking his head to the side.

"Of course I do," Nala replied. "You're Prince Simba! There's nothing that can keep you down for ever! After all those bad guys you've fought you think an *illness* is going to stop you?" She laughed. "Come on, Simba. That sounds pretty silly for an incredible cub like you. I *know* you'll get better. I believe in you. You wouldn't be my hero otherwise."

Simba's eyes were half-closed, a big smile on his face, smitten with Nala. "I don't know how you do it, but you can *a/ways* cheer me up. I feel much better already!"

"Great!" Nala exclaimed, grinning. "So all you have to do is sit back, relax and just wait until you feel better. It's really all you *can* do."

"Then can we at least have some fun *inside*?" Simba asked. "There must be *something* we can do."

A smile spread across Nala's face. "Simba, I have just the idea."

Tojo winced at the memories of his pride burning into nothingness. They hurt. They physically hurt. He felt like someone had punched him right in the stomach. The memory was so awful... so horrible... and so mysterious.

That was one thing that Tojo always wondered about – ever since he had become Tama's slave and was forced to do whatever she asked him to. There was nothing left of Tojo's pride, because of the fire. But what Tojo wanted to know was this.

How did it start? Tojo closed his eyes, deep in thought, pushing everything else out of his mind. *It was all so... confusing*, he thought, frowning. Tojo really couldn't remember how it had all started. One second he was going about his normal life; the next he was standing right in the middle of a blazing inferno, his normal life crumbling to dust right in front of him. *What happened before all that?* he asked himself, his mind struggling to process what had happened before the fire. *What was I doing?*

And that was when it hit Tojo.

That was when he remembered.

Tojo was sleeping. Or at least, he was drifting off into sleep. He lay in the corner of his parents' den, just trying to take a little nap. His parents had insisted on this, saying that "something important had to be done later on."

Everything seemed very hazy and blurry, but he could hear voices. Distant voices. Voices that sounded rather quiet, but he could just about recognise.

The voices of his parents. They seemed to be... discussing something. Something important. Something very important, from what he could tell.

His mother – who was called Aina – was talking to Tojo's father, who was known as Kujali. "Kujali, this is very important for him. He needs to know," she told her mate.

"But he's too young," Kujali countered. "Aina, you need to think about what this will do to him. Think of the pressure. He panics and worries a lot already. I get the feeling that telling him will only make things worse."

"But if we tell him too late then he won't be prepared. That might make him panic and worry. Don't you think it's wiser to explain this to him in his younger years, rather than when he's an adult? At least then he'll know, and can learn what to do," Aina explained.

"I just think that it's a bit too early," said Kujali. "Maybe if we just leave it for a few months then—"

"A few months?" interrupted Aina loudly. "You can't be serious! By then he'll have reached his teenage years, Kujali! That's far too late! We need to tell him now! Why do you think I told him to take a nap? Because we need to explain it to him tonight. We need his full attention. We need our son to understand what is required of him. You of all people should know that."

"Yes, but I wasn't like our son. I was a little more... carefree. Tojo is smarter, and cleverer, and worries a lot more. I'm afraid of what this will do to him, Aina. I don't want it to upset him. It might upset him so much that he'll refuse."

"Now you're the one who is worrying too much," Aina said. "You need to accept this, Kujali. We are going to tell Tojo of his responsibilities tonight. We need to. There's no better time."

"But it's such a big thing," Kujali said, worry evident in his tone. "To find out that you are to become the future King is a very big responsibility indeed. When my father told me, I thought it would be very exciting. I spent most of my time bragging to all my friends about it. But, as I said, Tojo is different. I know that he'll just feel pressured all of the time. I know it."

"Tojo is the only one who can fix things right now. You know the state this pride is in. People are dying, Kujali. There's hardly any food, and the lionesses just keep getting sick. Starvation and disease. That's all we have. Nothing else."

Kujali thought for a moment, and then finally, he nodded. "Okay. We'll tell him. Maybe he will make a difference."

"I know he will make a difference," said Aina. "Tojo will become the King, and he will do us all proud. He'll be the greatest King who ever lived. King Tojo."

Tojo finally drifted off to sleep in the corner of the den, and would forget about this conversation for a long time to come...

Chapter 4: Chapter 4: Simba's Scary Story

Chapter Four: Simba's Scary Story

"... And then, the hungry monster got closer, and closer, licking its lips as it prepared to eat Zazu, who was crying like a baby and shaking with fear. 'No, no!' he pleaded, as the monster opened its jaws, ready to swallow him whole. 'Please don't eat me! I have so much to live for!' But the monster ignored Zazu's cries, and in one swift movement gobbled him up and chewed him to pieces. Zazu was never seen again." Nala smiled. "Not that anyone cared."

Simba and Nala both burst out laughing, rolling about on the ground. "That has to be one of the funniest stories I've ever heard!" Simba exclaimed through laughter.

"Half the time I didn't even know what I was saying!" Nala told him. "It all sounded so stupid!"

"That's what's so funny about it!" The two cubs laughed together, happy that they had finally found something fun to do in the den. They had decided to tell each other stories to pass the time. Funny stories, scary stories... whatever they wanted.

"It's your turn, Simba," said Nala. "What kind of story are you going to tell?"

"Well..." Simba thought for a moment, and then he suddenly remembered a story he had been meaning to tell Nala for quite some time, but never really had the time to. Something was always getting in the way – like some villain that needed to be taught a lesson, or a deadly illness that killed you in just a few days. Stuff like that.

It was quite a scary story, and Simba was pretty proud of himself for making it up. His mind could be really twisted when he wanted it to. "I've got a story," he informed Nala. "But I have to warn you, it's a pretty scary one."

"I don't mind," Nala replied, shrugging. "I can take anything you give me."

"Except tickling," Simba remarked with a sly smile. He got to his paws, taking a few steps forward, facing away from Nala. "Anyway, if it all gets too scary for you, then you can have a cuddle from me if you want."

"I think I'll have the cuddle anyway," said Nala with a smile. "Come on, then. Tell your 'scary story'. Just what is it about, anyway?"

Simba turned around dramatically, a sinister smile on his face. "The Royal Reaper," he revealed, causing Nala to give him a confused look. "Legend has it that for years a psychotic... psycho, has stalked all of the prides in the entire world. This is no ordinary murderer, though. He only kills lions that are part of the royal family. Kings, Queens, Princes, *Princesses*. But he doesn't just murder them..." Simba had a psychotic, evil glint in his auburn eyes. "He *rips them apart*."

Nala's eyes were wide, her full attention focused on Simba and his story. This was actually pretty creepy...

"The first thing the victims hear are his long claws clicking on the ground." Simba's claws extended, and he clicked them on the ground, mimicking the movements of the 'Royal Reaper'. "Then they turn around, and they see his messy grey fur, his untidy brown mane, and his jagged sharp teeth." Simba bared his own teeth for added effect. "And the last thing they ever hear is the sound of themselves gagging for breath as the Royal Reaper chokes them to death!"

Nala gasped. *No way*, she thought, her heart pounding in her chest. Simba was kind of freaking her out now... Just how did he come up with this story?

"But it doesn't just stop there," Simba continued. "Once he's choked his victims, he begins to tear them apart, piece by piece. First he starts with the eyes, digging them out with his jagged claws. And he pops them into his mouth, chewing on them so hard that they burst, and he slurps the slimy remains down his throat. Then he bites off the ears, and the tongue, and everything else until the victim no longer has a head! He only stops until there's nothing left of the victim's body. He devours them whole!"

Simba turned around, smiling evilly. "No one knows when the Royal Reaper will strike next, but one day you'll be looking the wrong way, and before you know it... *he's right in front of you!*" Simba shouted, pouncing at Nala and tackling her to the ground. Simba laughed evilly as he tickled her.

"Simba! Stop it!" she shouted through giggles.

Simba stopped tickling her, and grinned. "So, how did you like it? Scary, huh?"

Nala smiled in response, playfully pushing him away from her. "You have a sick mind, Simba. I don't know where you

come up with stuff like that."

"Hey, when you've met about twenty maniacs you pick up a few of their skills. Mainly, the creepy, disgusting side of things. You've gotta admit, it was a pretty cool story. I'd like to see someone else pull that off!"

The Royal Reaper stood on the outskirts of the Pride Lands, standing on the edge of a cliff, looking down on the magnificent scenery. He slowly clicked his long, sharp, jagged claws on the ground. *Click! Click! Click!* It was a sound he'd been used to his whole life. It was a sound that struck fear into the hearts of anyone who'd heard of him.

But hardly anyone had heard of the Royal Reaper. He was the subject of rumour and superstition. He was too quick to be noticed. Too fast for anyone to catch him. Too skilled to be captured. He could kill and guzzle down a person in thirty seconds flat. No one had the power to stop him. His strength was too great for *five* lions to stop him. He was invincible. No one had ever survived an attack by the Royal Reaper. All of his victims had been devoured. It... pleased him. Gave him pleasure on the sickest of levels.

The Royal Reaper knew everything about all of the prides for miles around. Each and every thing. *Especially* about the royal members of the pride. All about the Kings, the Queens, the Princes, the Princesses. He knew them all...

The Pride Lands. The pride there was considered to be the greatest of them all. That didn't matter to the Royal Reaper, though. By tonight, King Mufasa, Queen Sarabi, Prince Simba and Princess Nala would all be dead. He would kill them, and then consume them. The Pride Lands were his next target, and he was going to make sure that he wouldn't fail.

He had a plan. Since he knew so much about the royal family here, he knew how to exploit them. And he knew that the most exploitable of them all was Prince Simba. He was the 'hero'. He was also the one who had the most to lose.

The Royal Reaper's plan involved Simba. It was a simple plan, but one that was sure to work. The Royal Reaper had never failed before, and he wasn't likely to fail again.

After all, he was invincible.

AN: Oh, dear! The Royal Reaper is real! Pretty creepy what he does to his victims, huh? And what about Tojo? Now *that* is surprising!

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: How the Fire Started

AN: Time for another revelation chapter, which means more secrets! Hooray!

Chapter Five: How the Fire Started

"A prince?" Tama exclaimed, before bursting out laughing in front of Tojo. "Oh, that's a good one! You've just told me the funniest joke in the world! You – a prince!" She laughed even harder, hitting the ground repeatedly with a paw.

"I'm serious!" Tojo insisted, an honest look on his face. "I don't know, it's weird, I just... I was just thinking about things, and I... I remembered. It was a while ago. I could hardly hear it... but I did."

Tama stopped laughing, and looked up at him, a smile on her face. "You're kidding, right?" she said, getting to her paws. "Come on, Tojo – tell me this is all some big joke you've created to pass the time. I know you don't find this new home very interesting, but that doesn't mean you can trick me."

Tojo rolled his eyes. "Tama, when have I ever done anything like this to you before?" He didn't give her a chance to answer. "Never. I'm telling the truth, Tama. You've gotta believe me." He sighed sadly, looking down at the ground. "You're the only person that will." He looked desperately at her.

Tama stared into his bright blue eyes, and decided, for his sake, to believe him. "Okay, Tojo. Let's say I believe you – which I *don't* – about you being a 'prince'. Why would you be a prince in the first place? How? Who? When? That sort of stuff. Come on – explain."

"It's... hard to explain," replied Tojo, scratching his head as he strained to remember the incident. "You see, not too long before you found me, my parents were talking to each other. I was practically asleep, so I couldn't hear them too well, but I know it was something important."

"So what was it they were talking about?" Tama asked, listening attentively. This sounded very stupid to her – and unrealistic – but she couldn't help but be interested. She wanted to at least hear the end of this outlandish tale.

"They were talking about... me," Tojo explained. "About how I was going to be the future King. About how it could mess me up if they told me about it when I was a cub. They decided they were going to tell me that night, but... but then the fire started, and my parents died. The whole pride. They all died."

Tama just stared at him, and slowly realised that Tojo was telling the truth. Really, how could you make something like that up? Why would Tojo *want* to make something like that up? He was being truly, truly honest with her. And that meant that he *was* a prince, and that he really was going to become the future king of his pride.

And that made Tama feel so, so sorry for him.

"So... do you believe me now?" Tojo asked, managing a little smile at her.

Tama stared into his eyes, and a sad look overcame her face, causing her to look away from him. "Oh, no..." she said, covering her mouth with her paw. "Oh, no..."

Tojo walked over to her. "Tama, what's wrong?" he asked, confused by her sudden change of emotion. "What is it?"

Tama looked into Tojo's eyes, and he realised that she was close to tears. "I'm sorry, Tojo..." she said, breathing heavily. "I'm so sorry."

"For what?" Tojo asked, feeling even more confused now.

"For what happened," she replied. "I'm sorry. I couldn't get there in time. I couldn't... I couldn't stop him."

Tama didn't exactly know how far she had travelled, but she knew it had been a long distance. Her parents had disowned her, no longer accepting her as their daughter. They wanted her to go far away from them, and she was happy to oblige. She just wanted to run away as far as she could, taking her new evil personality with her. She wasn't the sweet little cub she used to be. Tama was a changed person.

This pride she had entered wasn't the most beautiful one. Tama could safely say that her pride was much worse, but this was still pretty bad. Most of the lionesses she had seen didn't look healthy, and the pride was severely lacking in food. There weren't any animals around to be hunted. The land was so barren.

Still, Tama preferred it to her original pride.

She hadn't stayed for very long, and decided she would find somewhere else to live. She was tired from walking such a far distance, but she knew that she had to keep going. Something good would come up.

While Tama was on her way out, she spotted something that made her blood run cold. Something that was horrific to her, even though she had adopted a new evil way of thinking. After witnessing this, Tama realised that she still couldn't shake off the good part of her, no matter how small it was now.

Tama spotted a lion hunched over a cluster of bushes. As the lion turned towards her, she saw that the bush was on fire. And this fire was spreading very, very quickly. Three of the bushes had caught fire in just a matter of seconds. It wouldn't be long before the whole pride was engulfed in flame...

Tama stared into the lion's hard brown eyes, wondering what was going on. "What are you doing?" Tama asked the lion.

"Fixing things," came the cold reply. He took a deep breath, looking Tama over. "Who are you?" he asked.

"My name's Tama," she introduced herself. "What's your name?"

"I'm King Kujali."

Tama couldn't help but gasp. The King? The King was trying to burn down the whole pride? "Why are you doing this?" Tama asked, horrified that the pride's leader was committing such a horrible act.

"Because there's no hope left," the King answered. "This pride is dead, and I'm going to make sure of that. For years we've suffered because of dirt and disease." A smile spread across his face. "But now I can finally fix that. There won't be any pride at all now. We'll all burn. Scream and burn as our purpose in life is fulfilled."

King Kujali turned away from Tama, and returned to stare at the blazing flames, his eyes glinting with insanity. The King had been driven mad, and now he was going to massacre his whole pride.

As Tama ran away, she knew that there was nothing she could do. She couldn't save this pride, or its people. All she could do was run. Run away and do nothing. She wasn't a good person. A good person would have saved them. A good person would have stopped this. A good person wouldn't have run away.

But Tama didn't realise that only a few more minutes would pass before she did something that truly was good.

She would save the Prince.

Nala opened her eyes to find herself staring at a sleeping Simba. She looked around, and realised that it was night. Jeez, how long have we been sleeping for? she asked herself, yawning as she got to her paws.

Simba was sleeping peacefully on the ground, a smile on his face. Looks like we had a pretty good time, Nala thought, thinking back to all the stories they had told each other. Nala's personal favourite was the Royal Reaper story, because it was actually pretty scary. Not that she would tell Simba that.

She was about to nudge him awake, when suddenly, someone grabbed her violently by the neck, and she found herself looking into the red eyes of a lion with messy grey fur, an untidy brown mane, and long, sharp, jagged claws.

"If you want to live a few hours more then I suggest you keep that mouth of yours shut," said the Royal Reaper.

***Chapter 6*: Chapter 6: Nala Is Hurt**

Chapter Six: Nala Is Hurt

Simba awoke with a yawn, his eyes still closed. "Is it morning yet, Nala?" he asked, expecting an answer from her.

Instead, he got quite a different answer. *"I'm afraid not, Simba,"* replied a voice that Simba didn't recognise.

Simba's eyes snapped open, fully alert, jumping to his paws. *My Simba Sense is tingling*, he thought, looking around the empty den. He noticed three things: Nala was gone; it was night; and that someone was talking to him from an unknown location. "Who is it?" Simba demanded, calling out to the strange voice.

"You can call me the Royal Reaper," replied the voice.

Simba gasped in surprise. *What? What? What? What? What?* he thought again and again, confused beyond belief. *This seriously can't be happening. It's impossible! I made up the Royal Reaper! He's not real!*

"The... the Royal Reaper?" Simba said, unable to hide the surprise in his voice. "But... you're not real."

"Well, for your information, I am, Simba. I'm mostly the subject of rumours and wild stories, but I am very, truly real," the Royal Reaper explained. *"I've eaten a lot of princes, but I'm sure that you will taste the best."*

This is crazy, Simba thought. This Royal Reaper was exactly like the one in his story, and that could only mean one thing.

Nala was in very serious danger.

"What have you done with Nala?" Simba demanded, knowing full well that the Royal Reaper had kidnapped her for some sinister purpose. Probably to lead him into some kind of trap. But, trap or no trap, he was going to rescue her.

"Oh, she's safe," the Royal Reaper answered. *"For now. I'm taking good care of her. Very good care indeed."*

Simba's eyes widened. "If you hurt her, then—"

The Royal Reaper chuckled, interrupting Simba. *"I'm afraid it's too late for warnings now, Simba. I've already... injured Nala to a certain extent, so she won't be running away from the location where I've held her captive. Was it necessary? Yes. Was it fun? Yes. Will I do it again? Yes."*

Simba gritted his teeth, his insides burning with rage. "What do you want?" he asked, resisting the urge to shout. If Nala was already hurt, then he was going to make sure that the Royal Reaper paid for his actions. He would make sure of that.

"I want you, Simba. Just come right on over to the water hole, and we can settle our business there."

"And if I don't?" said Simba, raising an eyebrow.

"Then I'll just have to devour Nala," the Royal Reaper replied. *"Her eyes are so beautiful... I'm sure they'll taste great."*

Simba gasped, and stood there, stunned. The Royal Reaper said no more, which meant that he had gone. Gone to the water hole, most likely. He wanted Simba to meet him there, for a purpose unknown. What did he want from him?

Simba looked around the lonely den, and realised that he had to get to the water hole as fast as possible, before the Royal Reaper hurt Nala even more. He'd already hurt her enough, and Simba wasn't going to stand for it.

Simba started to sprint forward a few steps, before he collapsed to the ground, grunting in pain. "No!" he cried, remembering that his body still wasn't used to running – or walking, for that matter. The Kulaani illness was fading away, but it was still there. Simba could feel it. At the very least he would have to wait another few days before it cleared up.

But right now, he needed to get moving! Nala's life was at stake! He couldn't just let her die!

"Okay," Simba said to himself, determined. "If I can't run or walk, then I'm just going to have to do the next best thing!" He grinned. "Crawl!"

Simba started crawling across the ground as fast as he could, which wasn't really very fast at all. Anyone watching would have thought he was going at a really slow pace, but to Simba, that didn't matter. At least he could move.

"Don't worry, Nala," he said as he crawled. "I'll be there before you know it."

Twenty Minutes Later...

Simba dug his claws into the ground, using all of the strength he had to crawl as fast as he could. He'd been moving for so long, and he felt like he'd been crawling for miles and miles. It was the longest journey he'd ever undertaken...

"Yes!" he cried triumphantly, as he finally made it out of the den. "And it only took me twenty minutes!"

He had a long way to go...

"Tama... you've said some pretty sick things before, but this really takes the wildebeest," Tojo said, once Tama had finished telling him the story of how she had come across his father trying to burn down his pride. "Why would my own father want to burn down the pride?"

"Tojo, I swear to you, I'm telling the truth!" Tama insisted. "I believed you when you told me that you were a prince! Don't you believe me?"

"It's just... too weird," Tojo replied, looking down at the ground. "You knew all this time and you never said?"

"I didn't even know he was your father until today, Tojo," Tama replied. "He was... insane. As soon as I looked into his eyes I could... see it. The darkness in his eyes. He had no hope left. No hope at all. He looked... dead. That's the only way I can really explain it. He was... dead. I'm sorry."

"It's okay," Tojo told her. "It's not your fault. I just don't understand it. My parents were talking about me becoming the future King. After that, why would my father want to burn down the pride? He didn't... *sound* insane."

"What were your parents like?" Tama asked, curious. She knew her parents were bad, but she never really knew anything about Tojo's. What were they like?

"Well... I don't really remember too much about them. I know that they argued a lot. They never really seemed happy with each other. Every time I looked they always seemed to be fighting over something. They weren't exactly the happiest couple in the world. I don't even think they were really in love with each other."

"How would you know?"

Tojo smiled at her. "I know what love feels like, and trust me, it isn't like that."

AN: More secrets, more danger and more excitement! I just /ove stuff like that. I hope that you do, too.

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: Confronting the Reaper

AN: Time for an action-packed battle between lion and cub! Actually, that... doesn't sound so epic, does it? Oh, well. What can you do?

Chapter Seven: Confronting the Reaper

"Can't... go... on..." Simba groaned, as he collapsed at the bottom of Pride Rock, too tired to go any further. It had taken him an hour just to get that far. There was no way he'd be able to make it to the water hole... No way...

I might as well just give up here... Simba thought, resting his head on his paws, closing his eyes. *This stupid illness has taken everything from me. My energy, my fun, Nala... She's going to die. And there's nothing I can do about it...*

Simba was about to fall unconscious due to exhaustion, when he repeated that thought in his head.

She's going to die.

Simba's eyes snapped open, suddenly feeling like he was the strongest person in the world. *No, she won't*, he thought, determined. *No. She. Won't.*

He sprinted off, all the pain melting away with every step he took. This illness wasn't going to take the most important thing in his life from him.

It wasn't going to take Nala.

The Royal Reaper had hurt her.

Ever since he had snatched Nala from the den, the Royal Reaper had treated Nala like she wasn't even a person. To prove his point that he was a threatening maniac – Nala didn't even think he *needed* to prove his point, but he did anyway – he had slashed her right in the face. So hard that it had knocked her unconscious instantly.

When Nala's eyes flickered open, she could taste blood in her mouth. She moaned, her face burning with pain. She wiped her muzzle with a paw, and looked down to see that her paw was smeared with blood. And a lot of it, too.

Nala looked around, and realised that she was by the water hole. Right by the edge. If she'd rolled over in her sleep, then she would have ended up drowning to death. This Royal Reaper guy clearly wasn't interested in keeping her alive. She'd kept her mouth shut just for the sake of living a little longer, and hoping that someone would come to her rescue. Preferably Simba...

Simba, Nala thought, surveying her surroundings. Simba was nowhere to be seen, and neither was the Royal Reaper. *Wait a minute*, Nala thought, confused. *Where is the—*

Nala was grabbed roughly by the throat again, and she found herself staring into the menacing eyes of the Royal Reaper once more. He had a terrifying smile on his face, which made Nala assume that he was about to murder her. Most likely in some kind of sadistic, horrible way that would, of course, be very painful. Some people could be so cruel...

"Your Prince is coming soon, Nala," the Royal Reaper told her. "Very soon. I can tell. He's kept me waiting, and I'm afraid that there will be consequences for that. Both for you *and* him. It'll be worth it, though. Just to see you two scream as I devour you. I might start with you first, just to break poor little Simba's heart."

"You leave him alone!" Nala cried, extending her claws and slashing the Royal Reaper in the face as hard as she could. She wanted to hurt him. Actually, no, that was too nice... She wanted to *kill* him!

Nala had left three deep claw marks in the Royal Reaper's cheek. Blood trickled from the wounds, and the Royal Reaper's frown widened. He didn't look like he was in pain. It didn't look like he had even *felt* it. Now he just looked even angrier than he was before, and Nala knew for a fact that wasn't good...

"You've just made a very bad mistake," the Royal Reaper said, before violently thrusting Nala's head into the water hole.

She coughed and gasped for air under the water, unable to breathe. The Royal Reaper had shoved her in there so fast she couldn't even process what was going on. She was drowning, she knew that, but... how could she get out? He had such a tight grip on her...

That was when Nala knew that he wasn't going to let her go. He was going to murder her there and then. Why couldn't she have kept her big mouth shut? Why? She was so... *stupid!*

Suddenly, Nala felt herself being wrenched out of the water and thrown onto the ground. She coughed and spluttered, gasping for breath.

She didn't even have time to regain her breath when the Royal Reaper grabbed her by the throat again, his enormous claws clasped around her small neck. "Do something like that again, and I won't pull you out of the water," he warned.

Nala tried to cough, but he was choking her so tight. "P-please..." she rasped, tears in her eyes. She felt truly, utterly terrified. She honestly thought that death was mere minutes – maybe even seconds – away.

"I see by that pleading look in your eyes that you want me to show you some mercy," said the Royal Reaper, his red eyes burning into hers. "Well, you can forget it. I never show my victims any mercy. You'll quite clearly be able to see that when Prince Simba gets here."

The Royal Reaper gripped Nala's neck as tightly as he could. She felt like her eyes were going to pop out. He then threw her to the ground again, causing her to cry out in pain.

"You should consider yourself lucky," he said. "It's only going to get worse."

"I don't think so," said Simba.

Tojo was shocked. He couldn't deny that. In just a matter of hours he'd discovered that he was a prince, and that his own father had burned down his old pride, killing everyone but him and Tama.

"So we were the only two survivors," said Tama, breaking the silence that Tojo thought would never end.

"Yeah..." replied Tojo. "It's kind of... funny that we ended up meeting each other." He smiled at her. "Thanks."

"For what?" Tama asked, confused.

"For saving me, of course," replied Tojo. "If it wasn't for you then I would have died in that fire. Looks like you've been doing good things for a long time, huh?"

Tama scoffed. "Yeah. Do I get a reward from you, *Prince Tojo*?" she teased.

"Don't call me that," said Tojo, frowning. "I'm not a Prince."

Tama smiled, giving him a funny look. "What? Yes, you are, Tojo. You said so yourself, remember?"

"The pride's gone, Tama," Tojo explained. "No pride, no prince. That's how it works. I'm the only one left."

"Technically, since there's no one left to oppose you, you're automatically the King," Tama informed him. "So, you're right – you're *not* a prince."

Tojo laughed in response, falling onto his back. "Oh, you're funny sometimes, Tama. When you're not trying to kill people."

"I've never murdered anyone, Tojo," she said.

"I said *trying*."

Tama giggled, unable to stop a wide smile spreading across her face. *That little guy is having an effect on me*, she thought to herself. *No. No, no, no. Don't even go there, Tama. Don't you dare.*

"You know what, Tojo?" she said, unable to help herself from speaking.

"What?"

"I think you would have made one great king."

The Royal Reaper turns his head in Simba's direction, and a wide grin spread across his face. *He looks... delicious.*

Nala looked up to see Simba, who was standing tall, proud and determined. You wouldn't have even been able to tell that he once had a deadly illness coursing through his veins.

"Prince Simba," the Royal Reaper said, pleased to see him. "How nice of you to join us for a little soiree."

Simba took one look at Nala, and his eyes widened in horror at what the Royal Reaper had done to her. He rushed over to her side, shocked to see her bleeding face and the bruises all over the body. That monster...

"Nala, are you okay?" he asked.

Nala coughed in response. "Not really," she replied weakly. "I feel a lot better now that you're here, though."

Simba turned to face the Royal Reaper, almost boiling with rage. "I'm here. Now what do you want?"

"To devour you," he replied, examining his sharp claws. "I've always dreamed of consuming the royal family of the Pride Lands. I always thought they'd taste the best. Looks like I've finally got the opportunity," he said with a malicious chuckle. "You're just part of my plan."

"Which is?" Simba asked.

"Oh, it's quite a simple plan. But it's still a brilliant one. You see, I'm going to eat you both right now. And once I've done that, I know that your parents will feel sick with worry that you've gone missing. I know that they'll look for you. I know that they'll look for you *here* – which is where I will be waiting. Waiting to devour them, too." He laughed evilly. "It'll be the greatest feast of all time!"

"Why did you have to make this stuff up?" Nala moaned at Simba. "You couldn't tell a happy story, could you?"

"It's not my fault," replied Simba, looking the Royal Reaper over. *He's just as I imagined him*, he thought. This felt really weird. To be staring at one of your own imaginary creations. *In every way*.

And that was when Simba had a very good idea indeed. "How are you real?" Simba questioned the Royal Reaper. "I made you up!"

"*You*?" The Royal Reaper laughed at that. "Very funny, Simba. A lot of people make up stories about me, but I hardly think that you *created* me."

"I know who I've created," Simba assured him. "You're one of my worst creations, actually. *The* worst, in fact."

The Royal Reaper growled, taking a menacing step towards the cub. "What?" he raged.

"You're just really... stupid, to be honest. All you want to do is eat. Eat, eat, eat. Don't you ever get tired of that?" Simba said, turning away from the Royal Reaper, annoyed. "Do something else! You are so *boring*!"

The Royal Reaper roared and pounced at Simba suddenly, giving the cub no time to react. He tackled Simba to the ground easily, holding him down with one huge paw. "How do you like me now, you little brat?"

Simba couldn't speak, because the Royal Reaper had such a tight grip on him. He felt like his head was going to explode!

Nala, seeing he was in danger, found the strength to pounce at the Royal Reaper, leaping onto his back and slashing him repeatedly. "*Get! Off! Him! You! Freak!*"

The Royal Reaper growled loudly, reaching around to grab Nala with both of his enormous paws. He got hold of her easily, and threw her as hard and as fast as he could, sending Nala flying into a nearby tree. She smacked right into a branch – so hard that it broke off, and she fell to the ground, motionless. The fallen tree branch was embedded in the ground, the sharp, broken end of it sticking outwards.

The Royal Reaper smiled sadistically. "Looks like I don't have to worry about her struggling," he said, turning to Simba. "All that matters now is taking care of you."

Simba tried to get up, but the Royal Reaper held him down with both his paws, his sharp claws extending out as much as they could. One was just inches away from slicing his neck open.

"Now who's the stupid one?" he insulted the cub. "You shouldn't mess with people like me, kid. They're dangerous..." The Royal Reaper poked one of his claws into Simba's throat. "And *deadly*."

Simba used his hind paws to try and kick the Royal Reaper in the stomach, but he was too strong to be knocked over. It was like trying to bite a thick rock into pieces. He was *that* strong.

The Royal Reaper chuckled. "Oh, so you want to try and fight, do you?" he said, lifting Simba up into the air with one paw. "Well, I'll give you a fight you won't forget."

He hurled Simba into the air, and the cub smacked right into the same tree he'd thrown Nala into.

Simba slid to the ground, just barely able to stay conscious. "Is that all you got?" he taunted, smiling at the Royal Reaper.

The Royal Reaper's eyes were burning with hate. With one almighty roar he pounced at Simba, his claws outstretched, ready to tear him to pieces. Simba was going to be in his stomach within five seconds flat.

Simba's eyes widened, and he jumped out of the way of the Royal Reaper, revealing the broken end of the tree branch sticking out of the ground.

The Royal Reaper's eyes widened in surprise, but it was too late. He landed right on the sharp end of the branch, and it impaled him right through the chest.

The next sound Simba heard was too horrible to describe. He decided to block it out, and headed over to Nala as quickly as he could. She lay on her back, totally motionless.

He put his head up to her chest, and could make out a heartbeat. *She's still alive*, he realised, letting out a deep sigh. *She's still alive*. He picked her up and put her on his back, before hurrying away. As far away as he could from the corpse of the Royal Reaper.

Dinner was cancelled.

"Simba!" Sarabi shouted the next morning.

Simba got to his paws, rubbing one of his eyes. "What have I done now?" he groaned, padding over to his mother, who had an angry look on her face.

"I've just had about six complaints from the lionesses that their cubs have run home crying because of the dead body of a lion they found by the water hole!" she explained. "Did you have something to do with this?"

"Well, Mom, he tried to kill me and Nala!" Simba shouted, glaring into her eyes.

"Don't use that tone with me, young man!" Sarabi snapped. "You're grounded for a week!" She then turned around and walked away, leaving the den.

Simba's mouth dropped open. "B-but... But... Aw, come on!" he shouted, hitting the ground repeatedly with his paws. "This! Is! Not! Fair!"

A weary Nala headed over to him. "What's up?" she asked, rubbing her still aching face. She was still pretty beat-up from the fight with the Royal Reaper yesterday, but she was otherwise fine. Just a little bit shaken up by the whole thing. It had certainly scared her more than Simba's *story* about the Royal Reaper!

Simba looked at her, a shocked expression on his face. "I've just been grounded for saving the pride."

Nala stared into his eyes, and then burst out laughing, rolling about on the ground.

"It's not funny," Simba said, frowning.

Nala laughed even harder.

"It's *not*," Simba told her.

Nala continued to laugh.

"Can someone tell me why this is funny? Because I don't think it is! What is wrong with this world?"

Nala kept laughing, and Simba couldn't help but smile, shaking his head. "I'll never understand parents."

The End

AN: Finally, Simba's stupid Kulaani illness is no more! Simba can get on with his life – and I can get on with the rest of this series. What is next? As always, you'll find the answer just below you...

NEXT TIME: One morning, Simba and Nala wake up to find themselves in a completely different pride!